

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT OF 1996

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I rise in favor of passage of the substitute measure. The gentleman from California has proposed a bill that takes an important step in the direction of limiting the amount of money in Federal election campaigns. In so doing, this Democratic alternative goes in the opposite direction of H.R. 3820, which dramatically increases nearly every existing campaign contribution limit, and imposes no limit on spending.

Mr. Speaker, it is a mystery to me why the subject of campaign finance reform is one that continues to divide this House along partisan lines. There is a fundamental congruence of interest on this issue between our constituents, who want to reduce the influence of large amounts of money on elections, and the members of this body, who must raise these enormous sums. It is demanding difficult, and demeaning to spend so much time in the pursuit of money instead of discussing and debating the issues during a campaign.

The substitute measure would, for the first time, place a spending limit on candidates for Congress, with rewards for those who honor the limits and penalties for those who do not. The limit is generous--I would favor a more restrictive limitation--but it is a start, and it includes within it further limitations on expenditures of PAC contributions and large-donor contributions, ensuring that every candidate must turn to individuals of modest means for support.

I sincerely hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join in adopting these limits. I hope, too, that we will view the substitute bill as a good first step, and return to this subject again, soon.